



**Report to the Senior Executive Council,
Department of Defense**

CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION PROGRAM TASK GROUP

Report FY04-3

- **Recommendations related to the design and execution of a formal orientation program for the Department's senior civilian leadership**

December 2004

CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION PROGRAM TASK GROUP REPORT

TASK

This Task Group was formed to provide recommendations for a formal pre-assignment program to prepare senior civilian leaders in the Department of Defense (DoD) for the challenges they would face in their new roles, and enable them to be effective leaders in the Department. It was recognized that while these senior-level individuals were exceptionally skilled professionals, their understanding of the Department's decision-making processes, the priorities and programs of the Department, its systems and culture, and the statutory interrelationships among the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff and the Service enterprises would vary widely, allowing all to benefit from this type of orientation. This report represents the findings and the advice of the Defense Business Board (DBB) on this topic.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) assigning this task to the Board requested recommendations related to the following specific topics:

- Program of Instruction:
 - Content that enables new leaders to understand the priorities and programs of the Department, its systems and culture, and the interrelationships between the Joint, Services and staff enterprises.
 - Content that emphasizes how the decision-making processes in government are different from those in the private sector, and how to effectively manage those differences.
 - Specific sessions that, to the extent practicable, are conducted by individuals with extensive bipartisan experience at the highest levels of the National Security enterprise with content that includes budget, personnel policies, guidance on conflicts of interests, and congressional and public relations.

Defense Business Board

- Concept of Operation:
 - Senior-level oversight and responsibility for the program.
 - Prospective costs and anticipated time commitments of the program.

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Task Group Members: Barbara Barrett, Arnold Punaro, Dov Zakheim

Task Group Sponsor and DoD Liaison: Jim O’Beirne, Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for White House Liaison

Task Group Executive Secretary: Kelly S. Van Niman

PROCESS

The Task Group received informational briefings of military and civilian orientation and career development programs by the Department of Defense J-7, the Office of Civilian Personnel Policy and Washington Headquarters Services. The Task Group also conducted research on private sector best practices related to executive onboarding, tapping into the expertise of the Corporate Leadership Council, Spencer Stuart and Executive OnBoarding, LCC. Finally, interviews with senior former appointees, retired Flag Officers, University Presidents and Chief Executive Officers were conducted to benchmark best practices for executive new hires. The DBB extends its sincere gratitude to those individuals and organizations for their insights and guidance to the Department.

In 2001, the Department began conducting an extensive, formal orientation program for incoming Service Secretaries and the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (AT&L), and continued with an abbreviated program in 2003. Whereas the Task Group received feedback, and would agree, that the content of the programs was excellent, it was a constant challenge to coordinate the participation of the necessary, high-caliber presenters around an organized program structure. The current, abbreviated program is lengthy -- five weeks in duration, and covers very diverse subject matters in a joint context, but offers limited coverage of the personal side of onboarding, and has no follow up or measurement of the program’s benefit or contribution to the candidate’s success in his/her position.

Successful onboarding programs teach executives the unwritten rules of “how to get things done” and do so by covering the following points: Organizational Onboarding, Business Unit Onboarding, Functional Onboarding

Defense Business Board

and Personal Onboarding. Addressing each element allows the executive to learn organizational history, culture and strategic priorities; understand business workflow and handoffs in the decision-making process; assess his/her own organization's strengths and abilities (an area that the DoD candidate would cover after his/her Senate confirmation); and to become comfortable with the personal challenges of the new position. See the attached Task Group Final Presentation for a detailed description of the Elements of Executive Onboarding and how those could be applied to the onboarding of senior civilian leaders at the Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Group makes several, detailed recommendations regarding the program of instruction and a concept for operation. Generally, the elements of the program are divided into two phases: pre-confirmation and first year's employment. Certain pre-reading of reference materials and information on DoD governance, organization and structure are recommended during a "pre-arrival" onboarding phase.

Modeling best practices at DoD, the DBB recommends that Departmental Onboarding, Entity Onboarding, Functional Onboarding and Personal Onboarding elements be covered prior to the candidate's confirmation by the Senate. Functional and Personal Onboarding elements, that would require the candidate to be serving in his/her new role, must, by law, be covered after the candidate is confirmed by the Senate, and therefore would be covered during his/her first year of employment. See the attached report for specific objectives for each recommended program element.

Measurement of the program's value is critical. Feedback on the value of the various program elements should occur immediately following the candidate's confirmation and, again, six months into their tenure. A successful program will prepare the candidate for his/her new role and manage the "expectations-reality gap" resulting in increased collaboration among the Department's leaders (career, political and military), increased job satisfaction and less job turnover.

Defense Business Board

The DBB recommends implementing this civilian leadership orientation program through an in-house model, rather than outsourcing the program to an established training institution. This solution would be more cost effective, and allow the Secretary to select specific program content, and to receive the advice of a “trusted agent” who would execute the program. See the attached report for details of the concept of operation.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Bayer
Task Group Chairman

Attachment: Civilian Leadership Orientation Program Task Group Final
Presentation